



TESTIMONY
of the
CONNECTICUT CONFERENCE OF MUNICIPALITIES
to the
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

March 7, 2011

CCM is Connecticut's statewide association of towns and cities and the voice of local government - your partners in governing Connecticut. Our members represent over 90% of Connecticut's population. We appreciate this opportunity to provide testimony to you on issues of concern to towns and cities.

CCM opposes Raised House Bill 6505 "*An Act Concerning Stream Flow Regulations*".

The bill would restart the clock on stream flow regulations by requiring DEP to include groundwater withdrawals in the scope of the regulations.

Regulating something as complex as the groundwater/surface interaction between a pumping well and an adjacent surface water body is extremely difficult. Several water companies have analyzed the impact of the groundwater provisions on their water systems and concluded that strict limits on groundwater withdrawals during peak demand season would have decimated their communities, as well as industries such as agriculture and golf courses that are heavily dependent on groundwater supplies. Clearly, these communities would have faced moratoriums on new construction and economic development, as well as concerns that supplies were inadequate to protect public health and safety.

While DEP attempted to address these concerns (by revising the regulations in a way that would have given them broad authority to issue compliance orders when they determined that a groundwater operator was not operating "*in a manner that minimizes the impact on stream flow to the maximum extent practicable*"). This continues to be an uncertain and unpredictable standard.

Rather, **CCM encourages the General Assembly's support of Raised Senate Bill 1020 "*An Act Concerning Water Resources and Economic Development*"** on which we and many others testified in support of in front of the Commerce Committee on February 24, 2011.

CCM continues to have significant concerns about the impact the DEP proposed Stream Flow Regulations would have on local governments. It is important that the protection of the

environment be balanced with other critical needs, including the need to sustain critical municipal services and the need to refrain from imposing costly financial burdens on towns and cities.

In addition, CCM continues to have concerns that the proposed stream flow regulations would impose costly burdens on towns and cities and be yet another unfunded mandate by increasing water rates and diminishing opportunities to broaden municipal revenue bases. This is of particular concern to those towns served by municipal water departments, which will be required to make costly infrastructure changes to dams and water distribution systems and, in some cases, develop new sources of water supply. These changes would be on top of the many existing water and wastewater system mandates towns already must comply with, not to mention new ones being pushed forward - such as phosphorous and manganese removal.

The Commerce bill, SB 1020, would help address some of the concerns outlined above, by ensuring that reservoir releases do not jeopardize those water supplies that are also needed to meet a community's economic development needs. It would also protect communities where compliance may simply not be feasible, given the limitations and costs associated with developing new water supplies facing such communities.

In addition, the bill would ensure that stream flow issues be addressed in the most comprehensive manner by requiring all applicable agencies - including DPH, DEP, DECD and DOA - to work together to craft a plan that works best for the state as a whole.

CCM urges the committee to oppose RB 6505 and take no action it.

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If you have any questions, please contact Kachina Walsh-Weaver, Senior Legislative Associate of CCM via email kweaver@ccm-ct.org or via phone (203) 498-3026.